



THE FOUR W'S.

THE QUEERCLOVER CHRONICLES.

BY JOHN BROWNJOHN.

II.—ACCORDINGLY HIGGLETY PIGGLETY HIC HAEC HOC.

MISS PATIENCE POLYCARP brought her broom to a rest, and stood in her front doorway watching the three boys who had just tipped their hats to her as they went by.

"You often see *two* persons arm-in-arm," she remarked to herself, "but *three* is something *uncommon*. An' it's a good sign, too. There ain't three likelier and prettier boys than the Three W's in the town of Turnover!"

Miss Patience Polycarp might well say that The Three W's (so called because their first names all began with the letter W, and because they were almost always together) were, in spite of their bare feet and torn straw hats, a trio of as well-behaved

and manly lads as could be found in the whole town of Queerclover. Everybody liked them except Squire Barnaby, and he never liked anybody. As for going bare-footed and wearing ragged hats, nobody thought anything of that in Queerclover.

While the Three W's were still within speaking distance a sudden impulse seemed to seize Miss Patience. She raised her voice and called after them shrilly:

"Boys! boys! will you come back a minute?"

So the three lads turned promptly, dropping each other's arms as they did so, and walked back to the front gate.

"I want you to help me a bit," said Miss Patience. "Can you?"

"Certainly, ma'am," answered Winchell. "It's Saturday, an' we've got the whole forenoon before us."

"It ain't much of a job," continued Miss Patience, "but it's more than *I* can manage—step in a minute."

So they all three took off their hats, and, wiping their feet on the door-mat, followed her in through the hall to the dining-room. Miss Polycarp pointed to a huge water-melon that lay in a platter on the table. One end of it had been cut off.

"*There* is the job," said she. "I want it taken off and eaten up. You can add another W to The Three W's—eh, William Robeson?" And the good lady laughed happily.

"Yes," said Will, laughing too. "We'll incorporate it into the Firm, so to speak. No doubt Warren and Winch will consent."

"Of course," put in Warren—Warren Holmes—"but arn't you robbing yourself, Miss Polycarp?"

"Bless you, no indeed! I've eaten all I can of it already. It'll spoil if you don't take it. I expected comp'ny, but they didn't come."

And then, thanking Miss Patience heartily, they took the water-melon in their arms and went out again.

"We are the *Four* W's now," said Winchell, as they went down the steps. Winchell's last name was Holmes, too. He was Warren Holmes' cousin.

"I guess you'll very soon make yourselves three again," Miss Patience answered after; and then she went back to her sweeping.

"Now for a shady, comfortable place to eat it in," said Will Robeson, as they walked along.

"There's the Pond," suggested Warren. "It's cool and comfortable over there."

"What's the use of going so far when there are plenty of places just as good close at hand?" objected Winch.

"Where?" said Will.

"Well, there's Mill Hollow."

"That's two lots off at least," declared Warren.

"Why not go over here right back of Squire Barnaby's barn? It's nice and shady there."

"All right," assented both the others; and climbing the wall and crossing a brief intervening space they presently halted and threw themselves down on the grass in the shade of one of the Squire's numerous out-buildings. The boys of Queerclover were accustomed to go pretty much where they pleased.

Without any unnecessary delay the Firm at once set about the business before them. Winchell sat in the centre and carved. The eating and the conver-

sation were pretty equally divided among the three.

"Isn't this red hot!" uttered Will from behind a strip of rind, that reached from ear to ear.

"What? The weather?" said Warren, wiping his brow with his sleeve, and picking up another slice that Winch had just cut off.

"No, the melon."

"It certainly is a decidedly good one," declared Warren.

"It is perfectly delicious!" echoed Winch himself. "As good as if we'd got it from the Squire's melon patch."

"The Squire does raise some mighty nice melons," asserted Will. "I wonder when his Japanese melons will be ripe. He *deserves* to have 'em stolen. He's so mean about 'em." This was said in recollection of the fact that Squire Barnaby had been robbed of large quantities of his choicest melons the year before. During the present season he had given out that any one found on his melon-patch, would be shot at sight—a threat which so far, preserved him from trespass. He had large quantities of all sorts of melons, but nobody ever got a taste of them except those who stole them, or those who paid for them. The Squire was not a generous man.

"They say stolen fruit is always the sweetest," continued Winchell, as he brushed the dark seeds from still another slice.

"That accounts for *this* one's being so sweet," said Will. And they all laughed together at the thought of good Miss Patience Polycarp's having *stolen* the water melon!

By and by, when they had all eaten pretty nearly their fill, Will, who had been lying there with his chin in his hands, thoughtfully chewing a blade of grass, suddenly began laughing again—this time rather quietly as though to himself.

"What's the matter now, Will?"—from Winchell.

"Nothing—only I was thinking of your composition, yesterday. Ha! ha! ha!"

Winch laughed too, a little ruefully.

"It *was* rather funny," he observed.

"I should *accordingly* think accordingly it *accordingly* was!" added Warren. And then again they all laughed merrily together.

The allusion had been to one of Winchell's school compositions which the teacher had read before the school the afternoon before, criticising it for the constant recurrence in it of the adverb *accordingly*. It

seemed as though the young author had used it after almost every word. In one single short sentence it had occurred four times.

All at once Will ejected the remnants of the blade of grass from his mouth and spoke again.

"I'll tell you what let's do, boys," said he. "Just for the fun of it, you know."

"By all means, if there's any fun in it," cried the others. "What is it?"

"For a certain time—say from twelve this noon, until six to-night, whenever any one of us says anything—no matter *where* or to *whom*—we will put in *accordingly* after every word. What do you say? It will sound rather queer, won't it? But I reckon we shall get as much fun out of it as anybody."

The others at once caught the idea proposed, and readily agreed to it. Warren had a slight amendment to suggest, however.

"While we are about it, let's make it as funny as we can," said he. "There's nothing very funny about the word *accordingly*. Why not take some other word instead?"

"Well," assented Will. "Or—say we first take that and add something to it. Let's take *accordingly higglety pigglety*, for instance. Or, *accordingly higglety pigglety hic haec hoc*."

"Good!" pronounced Winchell. "And now let's shake hands on it—to make it more binding, you know."

So they all stood up together and clasped hands as solemnly as the Men of Uri.

"Understand now," said Will again. "From twelve o'clock this noon to six o'clock to-night."

"From twelve o'clock this noon to six o'clock to night"—repeated his comrades.

"We will say *accordingly higglety pigglety hic haec hoc*."

"We will say *accordingly higglety pigglety hic haec hoc*," echoed the Chorus.

"After every word we utter."

"After every word we utter."

"Honor bright!" said Will.

"Honor bright!" declared the other two.

And when the Three W's said "honor bright," you could depend upon them, be sure, though the very sky should tumble down.

An hour after that Winchell Holmes, sitting at the dinner-table at home, reached over and helped himself to a piece of corn-beef.

"Why don't you *ask* for things when you want

them, Winchell?" said his mother, in some surprise. Winch made no reply.

"What's the matter with you to-day, Winchell?" Mrs. Holmes continued. "You haven't said a single word since we sat down."

Winch looked up and laughed, but still said nothing. Somehow or other, when the time came to do it, it was harder than he had thought to carry out the vow made in Squire Barnaby's barn-yard.

Before anything further could at this moment be said, however, there came a loud knock at the kitchen door. And then, when Mrs. Holmes opened it, there stood Hollis Roper, the town constable, with two or three persons just behind him.

"Is Winch here, Mrs. Holmes?" asked he. And then, seeing Winchell sitting at the table, he spoke directly to him. "You are wanted down ter ther town-clerk's office," he said. Court begins at half parst one *purcisely*."

"What's the matter?" exclaimed he. And then, suddenly recollecting himself, he added, half under his breath: "*Accordingly higglety pigglety hic haec hoc!*"

"Nothin'—only you an' Warren an' Will Robeson hev ben inter Squire Barnaby's melon patch. Leastways, so the Squire says. I've got the other two boys outside here. You'll hev ter come along at once. Court begins at harf-parst-one."

Winchell shut his teeth hard, and taking down his torn straw hat went out the door without a word. Warren and Will were in the yard and with them Jason Grant, Squire Barnaby's man-of-all-work. Will looked up at Winch as the latter took his place beside them.

"*Accordingly higglety pigglety hic haec hoc*," said he. At which all three of them laughed in spite of themselves, although immediately after they fell into a lugubrious silence as they were directed to "march along." Poor Mrs. Holmes stood in the door-way looking very much distressed; but Winch did not trust himself to say a single word to her. How could he with that terrible "*accordingly higglety pigglety hic haec hoc*," sticking in his throat.

And for the same reason the three boys, after making one or two ineffectual attempts to discuss among themselves this unexpected turn of affairs, relapsed into silence, and would not even make answer when Hollis Roper spoke to them—at which he declared they were a grouty set, and he wouldn't wonder if they were guilty after all.

Arrived at the Court-room, they found the remainder of Queerclover village (a good part of the Queercloverians had joined them by the way) anxiously awaiting their appearance. Justice Peters sat at one end of his long table with a number of huge law books before him, and Squire Barnaby at his side. Justice Peters was a retired attorney who had degenerated into a country Justice of the Peace. He was known to be rather an obstinate old gentleman. Indeed, people of the village (by no means lacking in intelligence,) had been heard to speak of him as "pig-headed," a word perhaps more expressive than elegant. And a local wit had once declared that Justice Peters was like *necessity* — in that he "knew no law."

Justice Peters called the "Court" (which consisted entirely of himself so far as lawyers were concerned) to order as soon as the prisoners arrived, and began the trial at once in a manner and method quite his own.

"Ahem!" the Justice began, ominously clearing his throat. "The first witness for the State is Squire Barnaby. Squire Barnaby hold up your right hand"

The Squire was accordingly put upon his oath and then the Court proceeded to question him.

"What is your name?"

"Erastus T. Barnaby."

"Erastus T. Barnaby?"

"Erastus Timothy Barnaby," explained the Squire.

"Very well! Very well!" uttered the Justice.

"You have a melon-patch, Squire Barnaby? — O, by the way, what is your occupation?"

"I am a farmer," said the Squire, "and I *have* a melon-patch."

"One thing at a time, Squire Barnaby," put in the Justice. "One thing at a time, if you please. You are a farmer, you say?"

"Yes," nodded the Squire.

"And you have a melon-patch?"

"Yes."

"Ah! Very well! Very well! So far so good. Any melons on your melon-patch, Squire Barnaby?"

"Not so many as there were this morning!" burst out the Squire, his feelings here at once taking entire possession of him and causing him to grow quite red in the face.

"Ah!" said the justice. "And how is that, Squire Barnaby?"

Whereupon, with various interruptions and a

"Hum!" and "Ha!" now and then from the Court, the Squire went on to relate that he had only a short time before found the tell-tale remains of at least *one* of his own water-melons lying on the grass in his own barn-yard. He knew it was one of his own melons because of a peculiar way of *tapping* them that he had — and on examining one of the pieces of rind found, he had perceived that he himself must have tapped it.

"Did you bring the piece of rind with you, Squire Barnaby?" questioned the Court.

"No," said the Squire, "I threw it to the hogs."

"Ah!" uttered the Court. "Very sorry for that — very sorry! Have you any idea who took your melon, Squire Barnaby?"

"Yes," cried the Squire. "Them three boys there — they took it." And he pointed to the three prisoners, who had been all this time standing, silent and rather disturbed where they had been first placed.

"That will do. That will do, Squire Barnaby," said the Court with an air of satisfaction. "We'll call the next witness."

The next witness was Jason Grant. Jason also, was rigidly interrogated as to his name, age, occupation, prospects, and numerous other points all bearing, of course, directly upon the case in court. Indeed, all these questions had to be asked and answered *twice* since the Court suddenly recollected, after a few minute's examination of the witness, that the customary oath had been forgotten, so that it became necessary to go back and begin over again after this had been properly administered.

Jason Grant was a very laconic and positive individual; and his testimony, when at last his learned examiner came to the case itself, was directly to the point and very damaging to our three young friends. Condensed, and freed from the constant and irrelevant remarks and interruptions of Justice Peters, it amounted to the following:

Jason, who was, as has been said, Squire Barnaby's man-of-all-work, had been in the barn back of the Squire's house that morning — somewhere about eleven o'clock he thought, and, going up into the mow to pitch down some hay for the cattle, the sound of voices had come in to him through the open window of the barn. To this window he had, accordingly, quietly made his way, and looking out, had seen the three prisoners, William Robeson and Warren and Winchell Holmes, sitting on the grass out

side and eating a water-melon. They were talking freely and he could hear distinctly what they said. They used Squire Barnaby's name and were speaking of his melons. Indeed, the first words he understood were these, spoken by Winch Holmes:—"got it from the Squire's melon-patch." Jason did not catch the first part of this sentence, but these words he did hear distinctly; and he inferred at once that it was the melon they were eating that the boys had got from the Squire's melon-patch. He had then listened closely to what followed, long enough to assure himself that this inference was correct. Will Robeson had said that "the Squire did raise first-rate melons" and wondered when his Japanese melons would be ripe. And then he had said—Jason remembered these words exactly too—"He *deserves* to have his melons stolen, he is so mean about 'em." And then Winch had said that "Stolen fruit was always the sweetest," and Will had replied, "That accounts for *this* one's being so sweet," at which they had all three laughed heartily. After that, the subject was changed; and after waiting and listening a few moments longer to see if any more was said about the melon, the witness had crept cautiously away again and reported the matter to the Squire.

There was a decided sensation in the court-room as Jason finished his testimony; and everybody looked disapprovingly upon our three heroes, and murmurs of "*of course* they're guilty"—and "they might as well own up"—and many like expressions ran around the room. The Justice rapped on the table with great dignity and called everybody to order.

"That closes the case for the prosecution," said he. "Now, young gentlemen, we will hear what *you* have to say." And he looked severely at the prisoners.

The latter, however, did not seem to have anything at all to say for themselves. They sat silent and shame-faced with all eyes upon them.

"Winchell Holmes, we will hear you first," Justice Peters went on. "What have you to say?"

Winch looked up with a big lump in his throat feeling that he must say something.

"Nothing," he began; and then he thought of his vow and his face flushed up and his tongue stammered as he blurted out:

"Nothing but, *accordingly higglety piglety hic haec hoc.*"

Justice Peters looked at the lad in astonishment. "I must say that is a novel plea to make," exclaimed he. And then, beginning to think that Winch was making fun of him, he said severely, "You may sit down, sir. We'll see if your companions make the same defense. Warren Holmes, what have you to say?"

Poor Warren, of much the same temperament as his cousin, and now even more demoralized than Winchell by what had just passed, made not a bit better work with his answer.

"Only—*accordingly higglety piglety hic haec hoc*"—he murmured, and in a voice so low and tremulous that it could hardly have been heard but for the deep silence that prevailed throughout the room.

Justice Peters brought the Statute Law of Massachusetts down upon the table with a tremendous *bang* and looked at the prisoners, scarcely able to believe his ears. "William Robeson," cried he, "let us hear if your senses have deserted you also! *Are you guilty of this charge, or not guilty?*"

Will looked straight at the Court and cleared his throat. He had rather more assurance than his two comrades, and, being questioned last, he had more time to collect himself. He meant to do the best he could and still not violate his vow. So he began to speak distinctly and slowly.

"Not *accordingly higglety piglety hic haec hoc* guilty *accordingly higglety piglety hic haec hoc!*" said he. And then he paused, almost frightened at his own words and hardly knowing whether to laugh or to cry.

"WHAT NONSENSE IS THIS!" now fairly shouted the exasperated Justice.

"Are you all crazy? I declare you guilty, every one of you, of feloniously stealing and eating one of Squire Barnaby's water-melons. You are fined five dollars each and costs. The Court is adjourned!"

"Wait a minute! Wait a minute, Justice Peters," at this instant a shrill voice was heard to cry out. And then, all at once, there was Miss Patience Polycarp making her way through the crowd to the table.

"There's one more witness on t'other side," said she. "An' that's *me.*"

And then, without the formality of any oath and with no show of question or objection from the amazed magistrate, Miss Polycarp proceeded to relate to the Court how she herself had given the boys their melon, which was one she had only the day be-

fore purchased, cash down, of Squire Erastus Barnaby.

The sensation caused in court, by this announcement, can be better imagined than described. Nor will we take space to describe — what, as a matter of course, followed — the acquittal of the Three W's and their immediate discharge from custody.

The people all crowded around them now to congratulate them ; but they answered always by smiles and looks rather than words, and as soon as was possible made their way off into the adjacent fields by themselves.

"CONFOUND *accordingly higglety pigglety hic haec hoc!*" exclaimed Winchell, as soon as they were alone.

"Agreed! *accordingly higglety pigglety hic haec hoc,*" said Warren. And then they all three burst out laughing with all their might.

It was plain however, that any satisfactory discussion of the matter between them was as good as impossible with that awful "*accordingly higglety pigglety hic haec hoc,*" leaping out of their mouths at every word, like the diamonds and toads in the fairy story ; so they finally, by tacit consent, went and sat down under the trees on the edge of the Pond, where Winchell stretched himself on his back and went to

sleep, Will read a newspaper he had in his pocket, and Warren fished with a pin in the water. And so, slowly and painfully, the long afternoon wore away.

The instant the village clock began striking six, Will came to his feet with a bound.

"Are you fellows coming?" demanded he.

"Where?" was the astonished question.

"You'll see!" said Will; and he started off toward the road at a rapid pace, followed by his companions. He led them straight to Squire Barnaby's front door and gave the rapper a jerk. The Squire himself answered the summons.

Will bowed gravely.

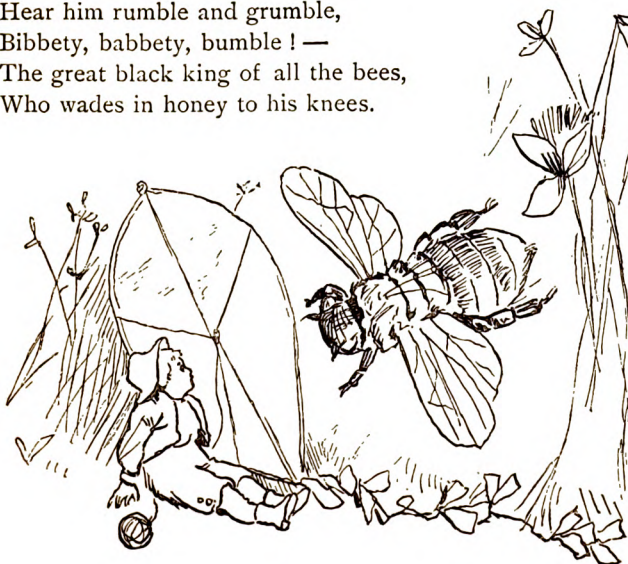
"I don't wish to be disrespectful, Squire Barnaby," said he, "but I've got just *this* to say and I mean it when I say it. If you ever accuse three honest boys of stealing your melons again, I'll have you taken to court and tried, convicted and *hung* for it! I will as sure as *accordingly higglety pigglety hic haec hoc!*"

And then, having worked himself into a fine rage, Will shook his fist full in the disconcerted farmer's face.

After which, the Three W's turned away and went home to supper, much relieved.

THE KING BEE.

Hear him rumble and grumble,
Bibbety, babbety, bumble! —
The great black king of all the bees,
Who wades in honey to his knees.



Hark, how over and over,
He growls at the red-top clover,
With a bag of sweetmeats on his thigh,
And a wicked twinkle in his eye.

Whene'er I hear his humming,
I sigh, "The king is coming —
The great black king with bands of gold,
Who nothing does but scold and scold."

Bibbety, babbety, bumble!
Hear him grumble and mumble:
"If I find a boy of any size,
I'll bite his finger till he cries!"